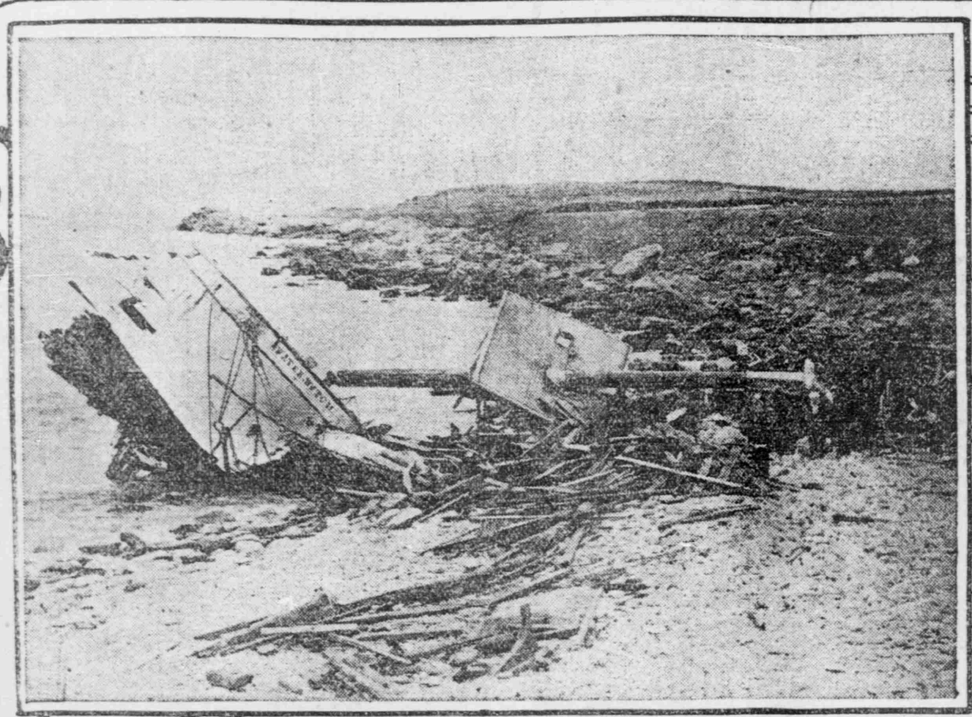
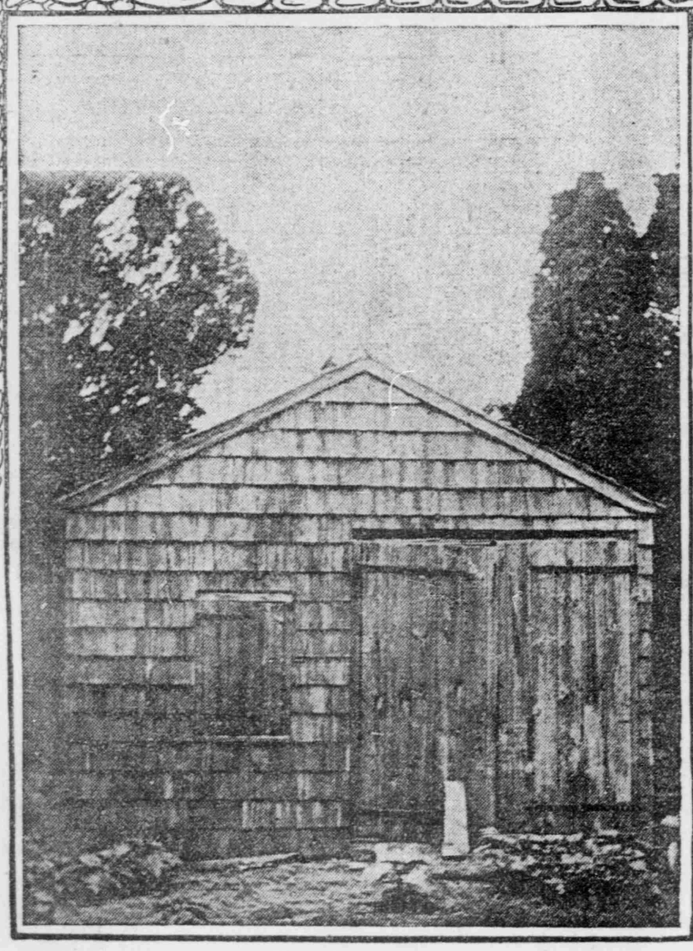
RASMUS S. MIDGETT—A HERO WHERE WORK DEMANDS HEROISM

AMERICAN BRIG WATER WITCH. WRECKED ON BRENTON'S POINT, R. I.



SURFBOAT AND BOAT WAGON AT A MODERN LIFE-SAVING STATION.



FIRST UNITED STATES LIFE-SAVING STATION.
(At Sandy Hook, N. J.)

RASMUS S. MIDGETT.
A Typical Man in the Service.

Some Other Thrilling Stories of the Devotion to Duty and Sacrifice of Self Shown by Men in the Life-Saving Service.

disheartening that he felt compelled to wait for daylight, and therefore ordered the boat ashore. At his request the people of the vicinity kindled a large bonfire, which it was thought might possibly be seen from the vessel, while all hands were permitted to lie down for an hour and a half upon straw brought by the farmers. After breakfast, procured at a farmhouse near by, the keeper sent the entire crew along the cliffs for the purpose of sighting the vessel if possible when daylight should break, but no signs of her were discovered, and again he launched, leaving a man on shore with instructions to ascend to the top of a windmill standing on a hill, and, if he should pick her up, to signal which way the boat should go.

Schooner Sighted.

"As soon as the lookout reached the top of the mill he discovered the schooner showing a mere speck in the distance, and upon his signal the keeper put back and made her out very well with the aid of marine glasses. Taking note of her bearings by the compass he again launched, and, having the wind astern, soon made a distance of ten miles off shore, when the wind came brisk from the east with a strong beam sea, which compelled him to proceed in the dangerous trough of the combing waves, and the weather was so cold that the spray rapidly covered the boat and its occupants with ice. The conditions then constantly grew more difficult and when the boat reached the wreck at 11:30 a. m., twenty miles off shore, the wind was blowing very hard and the sea was running high.

"The vessel and her crew were in a most pitiful condition. She had lost her sails, yawl boat, and both anchors, had her cabin smashed in, was leaking fast, and was heavily incumbered with ice. She was simply a helpless wreck, drifting about at the mercy of the storm. All on board were suffering grievously from exposure for more than fifty hours and from lack of food for upward of thirty-six hours. They had lost hope, bidden one another good-by, and were lying on the deck benumbed, despairing, and some of them hysterical. In a little while all would have perished.

"Having wrapped the woman in the keeper's overcoat and provided her with mittens the life-savers managed to place all hands safely into the surfboat, and, as nothing could be done to save the wreck, the keeper pushed off quickly with a view of gaining the land before darkness should shut down. All were well-nigh worn out, and the return trip lay in the trough of the sea, which made it necessary to constantly head the boat up to the breakers, whereby her progress was much impeded. A little assistance was rendered at the oars by some of the shipwrecked men, when they were sufficiently recovered, and, after an extremely trying experience the shore was reached about 4:30 p. m., a mile and a half from the launching place.

Ice Obstructions.

"There, however, on account of the formidable accumulation of ice, the boat could not land, and the crew were therefore compelled to carry the rescued persons ashore, through the water and ice, on their shoulders. Then they pulled farther down, where horses dragged the boat ashore for transportation.

"After partaking of a warm supper, kindly furnished by thoughtful women in the vicinity, the crew proceeded with the boat to Lakeside, and thence by train to Windsor Beach, the starting point, where they arrived about 9:30 p. m., December 15, having been engaged in this extremely hazardous enterprise more than a day and a night without sleep and with no rest, save for an anxious hour and a half in the open air spent upon a bit of straw spread upon the snow.

"They were under oars from 11:30 p. m. of the 14th to 4:30 p. m. of the 15th continuously, with the exception of about two hours, having pulled in a heavy seaway nearly or quite sixty miles, and all were more or less frostbitten, some seriously. Grave apprehensions existed on shore lest they should be lost, and preparations were made to send out a rescue party if necessary. Throughout all these trying circumstances you nobly bore your part, and that you and your comrades freely jeopardized your lives is clearly established.

Instance of Heroic Daring.

"I find great pleasure in acting under the law as the medium for the bestowal of the accompanying gold medal, which is designed to bear testimony of extreme and heroic daring in saving life from the perils of the sea."

Albert Bernston, surfman of the Golden Gate Life-Saving Station, received a silver medal for gallant conduct in rescuing a man from drowning September 6, 1901.

About 11 a. m., several persons were fishing off the rocks at Point Lobos, Cal., when one of them, John Sater, fell some twenty feet into the surf, where he was dashed about at the foot of the cliff, while his companions were unable to rescue him. Weakened by his desperate struggles, he was finally swept into a cavern in the side of the cliff, about eight feet wide and ten feet high at the entrance, and extending back some fifty feet, growing narrower and more dangerous all the way. He soon drifted against one side of the cave, where he secured a precarious hand hold on the wet and jagged rocks, and succeeded in keeping his head above water.

Lowered Into Cave.

John Hyslop, the marine observer at Point Lobos, learned of the accident and immediately conveyed the information to Surfman Bernston, on lookout in the life-saving tower. Leaving Mr. Hyslop to notify the keeper, the surfman seized a life buoy, with a line attached, and, hastening to the edge of the bluff, was lowered by a rope, held to two or three men, until he reached the mouth of the cavern, when he threw the buoy close to Sater and shouted for him to grasp it, but the imperiled man appeared to be too much exhausted to make the attempt and clung to the rocks, begging for help and despairingly crying that he could not hold on much longer.

Satisfied that Sater did not dare take to the buoy, Bernston hauled it back and, passing the line to some men who had meantime arrived on the rocks by a roundabout way, got inside the buoy himself and swam into the cavern. He then lashed Sater to the buoy and he was hauled out in safety, while Bernston remained clinging to the slippery rocks. As soon as Sater was landed, the buoy was floated back to Bernston and he, in turn, was hauled out safely.

Thomas Duggan, of New York city, was awarded a silver life-saving medal for heroic conduct on several occasions in rescuing persons from drowning.

Story of the Rescue, Single-Handed, of Ten Men From a Wreck Off Hatteras, When the Surfman Ten Times Ventured His Own Life.

THE making of an empire republic has developed the latent heroism in many a manly breast, and the daring exploits of our soldier boys across the Pacific have been heralded from one end of the land to the other.

But here at home we have an army of fighters in the service of Uncle Sam who have performed deeds of valor calling for a degree of courage equal to that of a Funston or a Hobson. They know nothing of the mechanism of a Krag-Jorgensen; they have been drilled in the use of the only gun designed to save life, instead of to kill.

Most Treacherous Foe.

The enemy they face is more treacherous than a Moro, and incomparably more formidable in attack and defense. The victories they have won—the lives they have rescued from their foe, evidences a quality of heroism that has never been outdone by the boys in blue. Now and then, stories of their achievements find they way into the newspapers and magazines, but many of their most daring deeds never come to the ear of the general public.

This little army of 2,000 men patrols the ocean and lake coasts of the United States, keeping vigilant watch for distressed mariners, under a system of discipline as rigorous as that maintained in the army, and they have been instrumental in saving thousands upon thousands of lives from the sea, and millions upon millions of property.

One of the most noteworthy rescues of recent years was made by Surfman Rasmus S. Midgett, of the Gull Shoal station, coast of North Carolina, at the wreck of the barkentine Priscilla of Baltimore, bound for Rio de Janeiro with a cargo of general merchandise, and having on board a crew of twelve, the captain's wife and son.

The Priscilla left Baltimore August 12, 1898, and proceeded on her voyage without mishap until the 16th, when she encountered a violent gale which carried away her lower topsail, mainsail and main stay-sail. In this disabled condition she drifted for twenty-four hours to the southwest, and finally struck bottom off Hatteras Shoals.

The wind was blowing a hurricane when she stranded, and the seas swept over her with awful fury, smashing the cabin skylights and carrying away the masts and washing overboard the captain's wife and son and two of the crew. In a short time the hull broke in two amidships. Fortunately those still on board found themselves on the after portion, which, although it continued to pound with terrific force, did not careen when the parts separated.

As daylight approached the gale abated somewhat, and the broken hull rested easier. But the weather was so thick that the hapless sailors could not ascertain their whereabouts, although they knew from soundings taken that the shore was not far distant. They were without means of signaling. Even if the necessary material had been at hand it is doubtful if they could have used it. Waves were continually breaking over the wreck, and it required all their strength to keep from being washed away.

Cries for Help.

At intervals they sent up cries for help. The terrible buffeting of wind and wave, however, was telling heavily upon them. It seemed inevitable that in a short time even the strongest must give up his hold.

The castaways were in this pitiable condition when Surfman Midgett, making the south patrol from his station, approached the scene of the disaster. While picking his way on horseback across gullies and through the surf, which inundated the low beach far back from the normal shore line, he discovered floating objects which he took to be cans or buckets.

A short distance on they became thicker, and he dismounted and picked up two or three of them. Farther, he came across boxes, barrels and other wreckage piled up on the beach.

His experience as a surfman told him what his discovery portended, and mounting his horse he hurried on as rapidly as possible in search of the wreck which he was sure he would find not far off. At length he heard a cry of distress, followed by a chorus of shouts.

Voices Not Far Off.

Although the darkness was still so great that he could see only a few feet away, the voices seemed to be very near. Dismounting and fastening his horse, he groped his way through the gloom in the direction whence came the calls. He soon found himself at the water's edge on the face of a bluff considerably higher than the surrounding beach.

From this vantage point he made out the lines of a ship's hull rising and falling with the ocean swell. Against the sky he faintly discerned the forms of several persons huddled together upon it.

Examining the descent in front, he cautiously made his way down to the water's edge. Watching a favorable opportunity when the breakers receded, he waded out as near to the wreck as in his judgment safety permitted, meantime answering the call of those on board.

Promised to Try.

One of their number called to know if he was a life-saver. Midgett shouted back:

"Yes!"

Then came the cry:

"Can you save us?"

The reply of the surfman was:

"I will try!"

A hundred feet out in the thundering surf were ten men in a position of extreme peril clinging to a broken ship which threatened momentarily to go to pieces. On the beach was a single lifesaver, Three miles through the heavy night was the station, from which it would take more than an hour to summon assistance.

If a rescue were to be made, it would have to be done quickly. There was, perhaps, only one chance in fifty that Midgett could save the poor fellows. He decided to take the one chance.

Rescue Accomplished.

Hallooing to the men to be ready when he gave the signal, he ran down to the wreck on the heels of an outgoing wave, up to his waist in water, and called for one of them to jump over. Clutching the man who responded, he half carried, half dragged him up the steep bank out of reach of the surf.

Some idea of the celerity necessary to accomplish this feat may be had from the fact that it had to be done between the outgoing of one sea and the incoming of another. Delay would have been fatal. The waves were rolling twenty feet high, and had they overtaken the surfman he would have been carried out and drowned by the powerful undertow.

As in the first instance, he assisted seven sailors to safety. There were still three on board so exhausted and bruised they could not help themselves as their shipmates had done. To get them over the side Midgett had to climb up on deck, hold on until a sea passed over them and receded, then lower his man and drop after him. Three times he did this, each time struggling back with a nearly lifeless form in his arms.

Wreck Broken Up.

Fifteen minutes after the last man was rescued the hull went to pieces. Up on the beach, however, out of reach of the hungry sea, lay ten men, battered and bleeding and stripped of nearly every vestige of clothing, but saved.

For this heroism Surfman Midgett was awarded a gold medal.

An incident no less heroic and picturesque than the above was the rescue effected by the life-saving crew of Charlotte, New York, who saved four men and one woman from the wreck of the schooner John R. Noyes, lost on Lake Ontario, December 15, 1902. The circumstances of the case are set forth in a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting the medals:

Story of a Rescue.

"About 5:30 p. m., of December 14," he says, "the train master of the New York Central Railroad, at Charlotte, New York, received a telegram requesting him to notify Keeper Gray, of your station that a vessel showing signals of distress lay at anchor about three miles off Lakeside, twenty-three miles from Charlotte, and upon receipt of the information, the keeper instantly prepared to go to her relief.

"The harbor tug was frozen in the ice up the river, and, therefore, could not tow the surfboat to the scene, while to undertake to pull twenty-three miles against a heavy sea on a winter night and with unmistakable omens of a storm at hand, would have been useless and foolhardy. Therefore, the keeper wisely resolved to proceed by rail to Lakeside, and thence, if possible, reach the vessel. He promptly secured orders for a special train at Windsor Beach, and a gang of shovelers set to work to break out two flat cars, standing on a siding. Owing, however, to the deep snow and other obstructions it was nearly two hours before the life-saving crew could get to the depot with the wagon carrying a surfboat, and it was an hour later when the train was ready.

To Encourage Wrecked Crew.

"At 11:30 p. m., the shore was gained, and while the boat was being removed from the sleds the keeper proceeded to a bluff, and burned a red Coston signal, with the hope that it might be visible to the crew of the distressed vessel, and encourage them. Before embarking, he also obtained from the person who sent the telegram as good an idea of her position as he could give. Then launching the boat the crew pulled outside into the heavy sea, but the weather was bitter cold, and the air was so filled with thick vapor covering the water that, after making an offing of about a mile the keeper found it impossible to see a dozen yards ahead.

"Nevertheless, he kept on by compass until about 3 o'clock in the morning, and for about three and one-half hours fruitlessly continued the search, burning several Coston signals. Finally, however, the bewilderment proved so

THE ART OF LIBEL.

What has become of the gentle art of suing for libel? In business circles articles go about from paper to paper which years ago would have shocked whole communities at a stroke. Here is the "Wall Street Journal" telling about the Anaconda mining property and complacently remarking that it is said the managers of the Amalgamated Copper Company bought the majority of the Anaconda stock at $35 per share and picked up more than $50 and then turned in the entire $60,000 to 900,000 shares at $60 a share to the company for which they were trustees. This would mean a profit of from $10 to $25 a share on 800,000 shares, or say $15,000,000 to $20,000,000, made by the insiders by purchasing from themselves. Can such charges be met with silence and has business reached the point where such assertions are received as matters of course? We would be glad to publish an answer to the remarkable story.